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T H E

*Liberty of Private Judgment in Matters*  
of RELIGION,

Explained and Vindicated.

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By JOHN TREN.

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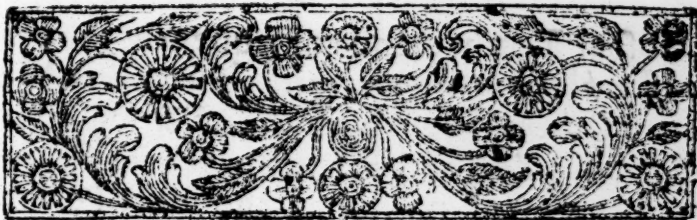
*If it be said, that Men are bound to be ruled by their Governors in determining what Things are lawful, and what not; to this it is answered, No true Protestant can swear blind Obedience to Church-Governors in all Things. It is the highest Usurpation to rob Men of the Liberty of their Judgments. That which we plead for against the Papists, is, That all Men have Eyes in their Heads as well as the Pope; That every one hath a Iudicium privatæ discretionis, which is the Rule of Practice, as to himself. Stillington's Iren. p. 118.*

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T H E

*Liberty of Private Judgment, &c.*

I T H E S S. V. 21.

*Prove all Things.*

Y considering these Words in their Connection with the foregoing Verse; wherein the Apostle exhorts them *not to despise Prophecies*, it seems very likely there were two particular Parties, both running to *Extremes*, which abounded in the Church of Christ at *Thessalonica*; which St. Paul endeavours to set right. Some, through the Ignorance, or Carelessness, or Viciousness of the *Preachers*; or through the Pride and Vanity of their own *Minds*, as thinking themselves above Instruction, were inclined to throw off *all* Regard to the Ministry of the Word; to cast Contempt on the Dispensers

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of

of Gospel Truths; and consequently to *forsake the assembling themselves together* for publick Worship. Others taken with the *affected* Gravity, and *seeming* Zeal and Earnestness of the Preacher; being Well-meaning, tho' *weak* Persons; were for encouraging and following *all* without Distinction, that came in the Name of GOD, and set themselves up for Ministers of CHRIST JESUS. Dangerous are the Consequences of *either* Extreme. The one, *viz.* despising Prophefying, naturally tends to keep Men *ignorant* of the great Truths of Christianity; to give them by Degrees *mean* Thoughts of the Religion of the Gospel; to throw off *at length* their Profession of Faith in CHRIST JESUS; to make them *Deists*, *Scepticks*; and it is well, if it doth not terminate in *Atheism* at last. The other, *namely*, making no *Difference* between Preachers, but giving heed *equally* to all that take upon them the Ministerial Office, is the necessary Parent of *Fickleness* and *Unsteadiness* of Mind, in Matters of Religion; and will *unavoidably* lead unto all Manner of *Delusion* and *Error*; *Superstition* and *Enthusiasm*; which is often worse than no Religion at all. To *both* which Parties our inspired Author proposeth the Advice contained in the Text, *Prove all Things, q. d.* as I would not have you despise all Prophefying in the general, so neither would I have you hearken to every Spirit



Spirit without Trial; and receive all Things that go under the Name of Prophecy. Should you rashly reject all Prophesying, you would turn your Back upon good as well as bad; should you receive all, you would be liable to be seduced and led astray into Error. Observe therefore this Rule, examine and prove all Things you hear.

THE Proposition I shall advance as the Subject of my Discourse from these Words, is this.

LIBERTY of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion, is a Right inherent in, and should be duly exercised by every Christian Professor.

THIS Doctrine is of the *last* Moment and Importance to us, as we are *Protestants*, and as we are *Dissenters*. On the Truth of it, is founded our Separation from the Church of *Rome*; and without it, we can never vindicate our withdrawing ourselves from the established Modes of Worship in this Kingdom, from the Charge and Guilt of *Schism*, which hath been many a Time injuriously fixed upon us, by some whose *Zeal* for the Church, hath gone beyond their *Knowledge*. I cannot therefore think it an unnecessary Trouble, if I endeavour, thro' Divine Assistance,

ance, to set this Doctrine in a clear Light ;  
to explain, prove, and improve it.

IN speaking to this Argument, my Method shall be this.

*First.* I SHALL briefly explain, in order to prevent all Misunderstanding, what that private Judgment is, which every Christian Professor, is supposed to have the Liberty of.

*Secondly.* I SHALL prove that the Liberty of private Judgment is a Right inherent in, and should be duly exercised by every Christian Professor.

*Thirdly.* I SHALL offer some Directions as to the Way and Manner, this private Judgment ought to be exercised in.

*First.* I SHALL briefly explain, in order to prevent all Misunderstanding, what that private Judgment is, which every Christian Professor is supposed to have the Liberty of. I am sensible this Point hath been carried *too* far, and some under Pretence of Liberty of private Judgment, have run to the greatest Extravagancies. I would therefore observe.

*First.*

*First.* THAT no private Christian hath any Right to judge for *another*, what *he* is to believe, or what *he* is to do. We are not to take upon us to dictate to our fellow Christians, Articles of Faith, or Rules of Practice. This certainly would soon bring the utmost Confusion into the Christian World. For the same Reason that I have to give Laws to another, that other hath to give Laws to me. We all stand upon the *same* Level in this Respect. GOD is the supreme, and our *common* LORD and GOVERNOR. To him *alone* doth it appertain to prescribe Laws for human Conduct in Matters of Religion. It is an Encroachment upon his Prerogative, for any Christian *authoritatively* to pronounce to his Brother, This are you to believe, and This to disbelieve; This must you *do*, and This must you let alone.

*Secondly.* No private Christian hath any Right to sit in Judgment upon, and to condemn another for *differing* in his Sentiments from him. He is not to judge hardly of, and pronounce Sentence upon a Christian Neighbour and Brother, because he doth not believe as he believes, nor act as he acts.

DIFFERENCES in Opinion and Practice, as to Matters of Religion, have always been in the Christian Church. And considering the different Genius<sup>s</sup> of Men's Minds; their different Ways of Education, their different Interests and Tempers, it is impossible it should be otherwise. So that it is a Thing *justly* questionable, whether there are two Men in the World, that think *exactly* alike in *every* Point of Christianity. They may agree on a *particular* set of Words and Phrases, which shall be by Consent, the *established* Standard of Orthodoxy, but when they come to explain themselves, and talk in their *own* Words, and use their *own* Expressions, we find no such Agreement and Harmony.

SOME Principles indeed there are, which in their natural Consequence *appear* to undermine the Foundations of all Religion. These Principles appearing *thus* to us, we cannot but look upon them pernicious and fatal. And it is a part of Christian Charity, if possible, to put a Stop to them; to use all the *rational* Methods that lie in our Power, to shew their Evil and Danger; and to draw off those from them, who have imbibed them. But these Principles *may* appear in another Guess View to those who hold them. They may not see their  
*fatal*



*fatal* Consequences ; and their Practice very often *shews*, that they are not influenced by them. And tho' their Practice should be agreeable to their Principles, provided it be not *notoriously* vicious and immoral, we cannot tell what Allowances *ought* to be made, and what Allowances *will* be made by GOD, for the Weakness of their Understandings ; for their Prepossessions and Prejudices ; for the Temptations that have led them thereinto. For us to pronounce therefore concerning them, that they are in a *damnable* State, and to assign them over to *eternal* Torments, is rash and uncharitable. No *such* Right of Judgment, hath any Christian.

BESIDES, we ought to consider, that we are fallible Creatures *Our-selves*, liable to Mistakes : That we are subject to *like* Passions and Prejudices with others ; and therefore, may possibly embrace Error for Truth, or look upon Truths *as* Important and Fundamental, which are not *really* such ; and consequently, those who differ from us, *may* be in the Right, whilst we are in the Wrong ; or may not err so *fatally*, as we imagine them to do. For us therefore to judge and condemn them *absolutely*, and without Mercy, is laying claim to a Title, which, I am sure, we should be ashamed



to usurp, viz. of being infallible. In short, we are all to give Account of Our-selves to G O D; who knows the *Springs* and Principles; the Motives and Ends of all our Actions; who *can*, and *will*, make a Difference between Men, and Things; and pass an *impartial*, and righteous Judgment upon all. St. Paul hath set this Matter in the clearest and strongest Light, *Romans xiv. 1. 2. 3. &c.* Him that is weak in the Faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations. For one believeth, that he may eat all Things, another, who is weak, eateth Herbs. Let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not, judge him that eateth; for G O D hath received him. What art thou, that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Tea, he shall be holden up, for G O D is able to make him stand. One Man esteemeth one Day above another, another esteemeth every Day alike. Let every Man be fully perswaded in his own Mind. He that regardeth a Day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the Day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth G O D Thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth G O D Thanks. ver. 10. Why dost thou judge thy Brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of C H R I S T. So  
then

*then every one of us shall give an Account of himself to G O D.* Was this Direction and Arguing of the Apostle, *more* considered and followed, we should have more Peace and Quietness, than hath been, in the Christian World.

*Thirdly.* EVERY Christian hath a Right of searching and determining for *himself*, what he ought to believe, and how to act, in Things relating to Religion. His Conscience is independant of *all* human Authority. No Man, or Body of Men, though composed of ever so *wise* and *learned* and *pious* Persons, have any Power to *impose* Articles of Faith, or Rules of religious Conduct upon him. He is to examine *all* Doctrines *himself*, and according as upon Examination he finds them, he may embrace or reject them. No Christian is to have *Creeeds* made for him, whose Articles he is bound to believe, whether he can see them well-grounded, or no: Nor is he obliged to follow any *Modes* of Divine Worship, which he doth not see G O D to recommend, and direct to, tho' all the *Authority* upon *Earth* enjoyn him to it. His *own* Conscience is to be his Guide, which he must take Care to *rightly* inform, in the *best* Manner he can.

I proceed

*Secondly.* To prove that this Liberty of private Judgment is a Right inherent in, and ought to be duly exercised by every Christian Professor; and I believe this will appear evident from the following Considerations.

*First.* THE *natural* Powers and Faculties, which GOD hath given *every* Man, by which he is enabled to judge thus for himself, clearly shew that he hath an inherent Right, and is bound in Duty so to do.

HAD not a Christian a *Capacity* of judging for himself; had not GOD by *Nature* qualified and furnished him for it, we could not imagine that it was expected of him, or that he had a Right so to do. Infants and Idiots therefore are excluded out of the present Argument. They, to be sure whilst they are such, cannot *possibly* search and examine, what is proper for them to believe or disbelieve, to do or let alone. We are speaking of *adult* Persons, grown up to Years of Discretion, and who have the *right* Use of their Reason. Such as these are *able*, by their rational Faculties, to enquire into and discern the Differences of Things; to distinguish Truth from Error; and to  
see

see what is fitting for them to act, and what to avoid.

AND can we think Almighty GOD would vouchsafe to his Creatures such *natural* Capacities, and not permit and require the *free* Use and Exercise of them? Hath our common, all-wise, and gracious Creator given us the Light of Reason; and yet expect we should walk Hood-wink'd and blind-fold where our Leaders should carry us? Is not this in effect to assert GOD hath given us these noble Natures in vain? Hath made us *reasonable* Creatures, in order to act like *irrational* Brutes? For *wherein* is that Man preferable to a Brute, that doth not exercise his rational Powers; that will not direct himself by the Light of his own Mind, but gives up himself entirely to the Guidance and Conduct of another?

*Secondly.* IT will farther appear, that every Christian hath a Right, and ought to judge for himself in Matters of Religion, if we consider that *Rule*, which GOD hath given him to form his Conduct by; which is so *easy* and so *plain*, as that *every* Christian hath it in his Power to use it, *so far* as to attain the end for which it was given, *viz.* Life and Salvation.



THE Scripture Revelation, which chalks out to us the only true Road to Happiness, is adapted to the Capacities of *all* Christians. The Truths there divulged to be *necessarily* believ'd and practis'd, are laid down in the plainest and clearest Manner. *Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? That is to bring CHRIST down from above, or who shall descend into the Deep? That is to bring up CHRIST again from the Dead. The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thine Heart; That is the Word of Faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord JESUS, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that GOD hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. Rom. x. 6. 7.*

HAD GOD now in the Revelation he hath given of his Mind and Will to the World, calculated the Contents of it *purely* for the Wise and Learned? Had he delivered such Doctrines *necessarily* to be believed as exceeded the reach of *common* Capacities; or such Rules of Practice as they could not *possibly* understand, we might then conclude he *designed* not the Scriptures for the Use of the Vulgar; nor that any but Scholars should judge of the Truths therein contained. But forasmuch as GOD intended the Scripture Revelation for the Benefit of the poor and unlearned, and hath made *every* Point of *necessary*



*necessary* Doctrine and Practice, level to their Apprehensions, it is a plain Proof, that GOD designed *every* Christian should judge for himself in Matters of Religion. And I cannot see how any Christian can answer the End of GOD, in giving so *plain* a *Revelation*, that will not be at the Pains of searching into, and examining *himself*, the Truths there revealed; and see with his *own* Eyes, what is Good, and what the Lord his GOD requireth of him; but instead of this, will yield an *implicit* Faith and Obedience to others; will take every Thing upon Trust from them; will believe just so much as, and no more, than they will have him believe; and, like a Child in Leading Strings, will Walk just the very Path they carry him in.

*Thirdly.* NOT only the *Nature* of the *Revelation* GOD hath given Mankind, which is so *plain* and *perspicuous*, as to be obvious to *common* Capacities, but also the great *Encouragement*, nay, the exprefs *Command*, which GOD *herein* gives to *every* Christian to judge for himself, evidenceth, that it is the *Right* and *Duty* of all so to do. GOD would have given no Man *any* *Encouragement* to what he knew he had *no Right* unto, nor enjoyned him any Thing which was not his *Duty* to do. The Question then

then is, hath GOD given in the Gospel *Revelation*, all Christians Encouragement to judge *each one* for himself in *Matters of Religion*? I should be loath to encourage you, my *Brethren*, to any Thing, without Foundation in the Word of GOD: You shall therefore see with your *own Eyes*, and judge for your-selves, whether I have not reason to assert what I do. Matt. vii. 15. *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheeps Cloathing, but inwardly they are ravenous Wolves: Ye shall know them by their Fruits.* This Caution is given by our Saviour to the *Multitudes*, who attended to hear his Preaching from the Mount, and evidently supposeth they had a *Right* of judging for themselves, of the Truth of the Doctrines, which they heard. How could they be exhorted otherwise to *beware* of false Prophets? How could our Lord otherwise tell them, they might *know* those false Prophets, by their Fruits? Again, *John v. 39.* Our Lord refers the Truth of his Divine Mission, to the *private* Judgment of the *Jews*, grounded on the serious Consideration of the Old Testament Prophecies. *Search, says he, the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.* Rom. xiv. 5. *Let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind.* i. e. With respect to his religious Conduct and Behaviour.

Behaviour. But how is it possible for a reasonable Creature to be so, without examining and weighing Doctrines in his own Mind aforehand? 1 John, iv. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God. i. e. Give not Credit to every Person that comes to you, with a Pretence of being inspired by the Spirit of GOD; but examine their Pretences and Doctrines, and see whether they are worthy of GOD or no; whether you can reasonably conclude the Persons under the Influence of the Divine Spirit, or a Spirit of Delusion and Error.*

HERE now is *sufficient* Encouragement, a Power *plainly* enough given to all Christians to judge for *themselves* in religious Matters.

*Fourthly.* THE Fallibility of Ministers; the Mistakes those are *liable* to, whose Business it is to dispense the Truths of GOD, if considered, will evidence the Right and Duty of every Christian, to judge for *himself* in Matters of Religion.

ALAS! Christians, your Ministers are fallible Creatures like yourselves: They have their *Treasure in earthen Vessels*: They are *frail* and *corrupt* as well as others: They  
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have *Passions* to ruffle and discompose their Minds, which *frequently* darken their Understandings, and give a wrong Bias to their Judgments: They have *Prejudices* to encounter with, which they have imbibed from the Method of Education they have been used to; false *Principles* they have many Times suck'd in from their Masters and Tutors, which often stick to them as long as they live. The *World* too often hath too great an Ascendant over them, and their Temporal Interest frequently sways too much with them.

AND shall Men *thus* subject to be *influenc'd* by Passions, to be *guided* by Prejudice, to be *governed* by worldly Interest? Shall such as *these* be looked upon as authorized by GOD to dictate Things, which are to be received without Examination? Can we imagine GOD hath given them *Dominion* over the Faith and Practice of their fellow-Christians? Must *their* Sayings be received as so many Oracles? Surely no Person of any Consideration can think so.

WERE Ministers indeed infallible? Were we assured they had the Spirit of GOD *so far* as to be guided by it unto *all* Truth, and preserve them from *all* Error? Could  
we



we be certain that they were *divinely* inspir'd like the Apostles, we might *then* with *some* Reason give up ourselves to their Direction, and regulate our Faith and Practice, without any Fears; according to their Determination. Though, *by the Way*, we find the great Apostle of the Gentiles renouncing all claim to any *Dominion* over the Faith of Christians. 2 Cor. i. 24; as also the primitive Converts to Christianity *so far* from yielding an *implicit* Faith and Obedience to *inspired* Preachers, that they took upon them to *examine* their Doctrines by the Scriptures, in order to see whether they were *agreeable* to the Word of GOD or no; and *so far* are they from being *blamed* for this Freedom, that they are recorded with Honour for Imitation. Acts xvii. 11. *These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all Readiness of Mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these Things were so.*

I proceed.

*Thirdly.* To offer some Directions as to the *Way* and *Manner* in which this private Judgment should be exercised by a Christian. And would you, my Brethren, *so* use the *Right* GOD hath given you; *so* discharge the *Duty* GOD hath made incumbent

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upon



upon you, *as* to find out and embrace the Truth, then

*First.* Be meek and humble, entertain *low* Thoughts of your-selves, endeavour to be affected with the *natural* Blindness and Darkness of your Understandings. A Sense of *that* will make you careful and diligent in your Examination of Things, and cautious what you receive. And really we have *abundant* Reason to be thus modest. Our *natural* Light, since the first *fatal* Apostacy, is under a strange Eclipse; and we are *generally* more inclined to be governed by Interest and Passion, than by right Reason. We should therefore have a Jealousy over ourselves, and be afraid, lest our *in-bred* Corruptions should gain the Ascendant, and carry us away, like an impetuous Torrent, out of the Paths of Truth. Such a modest, humble Opinion of ourselves will make us *laborious* and deliberate in our Searches; will always keep us *open* to Conviction, and ready to receive *New* Light from whatever Quarter it comes. Hence it is the wise Man exhorts his Son *not to be wise in his own Eyes.* Prov. iii. 7. which Exhortation, St. Paul thought so proper and reasonable, as to repeat it to the believing *Romans*: *Be not wise in your own Conceits.* Rom. xii. 16. Pride  
and

and Self-conceit hurries a Man on to embrace Opinions without *proper, previous* Consideration. The Man *full* of himself, of his *own* Sense and Parts, will not give himself the Time, nor be at the Trouble and Pains, of diving to the Bottom of Things: He entertains Principles *commonly* as they appear to him on *first* View, which is *often* very deceitful; and once he hath taken up a Notion, his Pride *commonly* makes him a Bigot to it; all the Reason that can be offered will have little or no effect upon him; he thinks it *beneath* him to renounce what he hath *once* embrac'd: And forasmuch as Pride is what the LORD greatly hates, 'tis no wonder that GOD in *Judgment* gives up such an one to follow his own vain Fancies and Imaginations. Whereas the *humble*, modest Enquirer after Truth, hath the Promise of GOD, that he will direct and assist him in his Enquiries. Psalm xxx. 10. *The meek will he guide in Judgment, the meek will he teach his Way.*

*Secondly.* ENDEAVOUR to free your Minds from all *past* Prepossessions and Prejudices: Let Truth be the *sole* End of your Enquiries; and be willing and resolved to embrace it, when found, let it cost what it will.

T H E R E

THERE are but *few* perhaps, if *any*, but what are prepossess'd in Favour of some Doctrines and Opinions, and prejudic'd against others. What from the *early* Care of our Parents, in instilling what they thought to be the Truth into our Minds; what from learning in our Youth a *received* Form of Doctrines contained in *Catechisms*; what from the Instructions of Masters and Tutors, it is a Thousand to One, but we entertain a particular Liking to, and Fondness for some Notions, and conceive as great an Aversion to others; which *frequently* gives such a Bias and Turn to our Minds, as to render us liable to be kept in Error as long as we live.

I WOULD not so far be misunderstood, as to be thought to blame the pious Care of Parents in forming the Minds of their Children, nor yet wholly to run down the Use of *Catechisms*: No! For certain a Parent ought to inform his Offspring of what he *apprehends* to be the Truth. It is his Duty to train them up *according to the best of his Judgment* in the Nurture and Admonition of the LORD. And a Child *doubtless* should pay a great Regard to the Instructions he hath received from his pious Parents, and not hastily depart from the Way of Religion he hath been brought up in.

*Catechisms*

*Catechisms* also, when they are accommodated to the Capacities of Children, are certainly very beneficial, and have been of Service to the religious Conduct of many a Christian, when grown up. But both Parents Instructions, and Catechetical Exercises, are *too* apt to prejudice Children in Favour of them, so as to make them obstinate in the Principles they have been bred up in; and unwilling and angry to hear any Thing, tho' ever so *calmly* and soberly, urged against them. And forasmuch as all Parents, how pious and learned soever, are *liable* to, and doubtless *guilty* of, many Mistakes; and all *Catechisms* are the Compositions of fallible Men, and many Mistakes perhaps may be found in every one: An *obstinate* Attachment both to one and the other will *necessarily* keep a Man in Error. When a Person comes to Years of Discretion, and is *capable* of searching into the Truth of Things *himself*, if ever he would receive any *solid* Satisfaction in the Enjoyment of the Truth, he should re-examine the Doctrines *freely* and *impartially*, which his Parents have inculcated upon him, or which he hath learnt out of his *Catechism*; he should endeavour *himself* to see their Agreement with right Reason, and the Rule of GOD's Word; otherwise it is more than *probable* he will live and die a Stranger to *many* Truths,



Truths, which it would have been greatly *serviceable* to him to have known. To give you an Instance of the *ill* effects of Prejudices imbibed from Education, let us consider the *Jewish* Nation: They had been instructed by their Parents and Teachers, to understand that Deliverance and Salvation, which they earnestly expected from their MESSIA, of a *Temporal* Deliverance; of Salvation from the Power and Tyranny of the *Romans*, under which they groaned. What was the Consequence of this Prepossession? *fatal enough!* For want of searching *duly* and *impartially* into the Writings of the Prophets themselves, they continued in their Error. Their MESSIA came at the *appointed* Time, and the Time they *expected* him in. But his Appearance not suiting their *pre-conceived* Notions of him, they did not *receive* him; they *persecuted* him; and with wicked Hands *crucified* and *slew* him; and through their Unbelief received no Benefit and Advantage by him.

*Thirdly.* LET the Scripture Revelation be the Subject of your *daily* Reading and Study. Cast not your Bibles aside as Books of no Significancy and Value; eternal Truths are *there* contained; and all our religious Conduct must be formed on the Plan *therein* laid down; every Thing we are to believe, and



and whatever we are to do, with respect to GOD, his Worship and Service, is to be found there. There we read of Truths regarding our religious Behaviour, that *unassisted* Reason could never have arrived to the Knowledge of; Truths of the utmost Moment and Importance, relating to our present Demeanour and future Happiness. There we have the *Assurance* of a reconcilable GOD, thro' a crucified SAVIOUR; the *Certainty* of all *proper* and *sufficient* Grace to enable us to comply with the Terms of Salvation; and of a future State of Rewards and Punishments. These are Truths to be *certainly* known only by Revelation, and the other Things that respect Religion, (I mean moral Virtue and Goodness) though they *may* be discovered by a *right* Use of our *natural* Powers and Faculties, yet the *explicit* Knowledge of them would cost *more* Time and Labour, than *most* would care, or could afford to be at; but in the Scripture Revelation they are displayed in the *clearest* Light, explain'd into the *lowest* Capacity, and enforc'd in *such* a Manner, as a rational Agent cannot *easily* resist.

To the Bible therefore should we make *close* Application; we should *diligently* read it, and *carefully* study it, if ever we desire to make a *right* Judgment in Matters of Religion

gion. Persons may talk of the Power and Strength of *human* Reason, and thereby endeavour to shew the Uselessness of the Scripture Revelation,\* but unless our Reason is *assisted* by the Light *there* communicated, we shall, we must *necessarily* be in the Dark, with respect to a great many Things relating to our religious Conduct and Behaviour.

*Fourthly.* BE no Strangers to the Throne of Grace for the *enlightening* Influences of the Divine Spirit. Beg of GOD, *constantly* and *importunately* that he would bestow upon you his Blessed Spirit to guide and direct you into the Paths of Truth.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the Care and Diligence we are *capable* of using in our Searches after Truth; tho' we study the Scriptures ever so *closely*, such is our *present State* and Condition, that thro' the *Weakness* of our Understandings, the *Influence* of Passion and Interest, we are *apt* to embrace Error for Truth: This every thoughtful and considering Person must be sensible of. The *more* we know of ourselves, and the Temper of our Minds, the *greater* shall we see the *Need* we stand in of *divine* Aid and Assistance. The Person that thinks his *natural Powers* and Faculties at *this Time of Day* in themselves

themselves *sufficient* to lead him in every Respect aright, is a Stranger to himself; hath made no Observations on his own Infirmities; nor ever considered the manifold, great, and various Temptations he is exposed to, which may, and often do lead him astray. *David* was as *wise* a Man, as most *perhaps* of the human Race, his natural and acquired Parts were *far* from being inconsiderable, as is manifest from the Psalms he hath composed; yet so sensible was *he* of his Imperfection and Frailty, that he often makes it Matter of his *earnest* Request to Almighty GOD, that he would enlighten, direct, and teach him. *Shew me thy Ways, O LORD, teach me thy Paths, lead me in thy Truth, and teach me, for thou art the GOD of my Salvation, on thee do I wait all the Day.* Psalm xxv. 4. 5. *Teach me thy Way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain Path, because of mine Enemies.* Psalm xxvii. 11. *Teach me thy Way, O LORD, I will walk in thy Truth, unite my Heart to fear thy Name.* Psalm lxxxvi. 11. And to mention no more. *Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law.* Psalm cxix. 18.

AND the great Reason we have to expect and look for his divine Influences on our sincere Request, should be a strong Motive

and Encouragement to us to apply to our heavenly Father on *that* Account: It is the Advice of an inspired Apostle. James i. 5. *If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of G O D who giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.*

F I N I S





